

Statement of Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert
on
H. Res. 892, Recognizing the dedication of the employees of NASA's Michoud
Assembly Facility, the "Michoud Hurricane Ride-out Team."

July 24, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 892, as amended, which recognizes the dedicated employees of NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility, the "Michoud Hurricane Ride-out Team."

Knowing full well the potential for disaster, and the impending danger they faced as Hurricane Katrina bore down on the Gulf Coast, 38 dedicated and heroic individuals put themselves in harm's way to save the Michoud Assembly Facility, which is of vital importance to our Nation's civil space program.

Located just 15 miles from New Orleans's French Quarter, this facility is where NASA constructs the Space Shuttle's External Tanks. Before the Shuttle, this facility was where NASA manufactured the gargantuan tanks on the Saturn rocket that took us to the Moon. In the future, NASA plans to use the facility to construct the rockets that will return us to the Moon.

These 38 brave employees risked life and limb to protect this valuable facility that ensures our Nation's preeminence in space. Facing 178 mile-per-hour winds that ripped large chunks of surrounding buildings clean off, the intrepid Ride-Out Team kept to its motto: "Not on Our Watch."

By keeping generators and water pumps running throughout the storm, they managed to prevent the facility from flooding and preserved important flight hardware that has kept the space program on track.

Because of the Ride-Out Team's efforts, the facility was up and running only a few weeks after the storm had passed. After just three months, nearly all 2,000 employees had returned to the facility despite the fact that 600 of them had lost their own homes.

By saving the facility, and returning it to operation as quickly as they did, they were able to get to work right away on External Tank modifications necessary for the second Return-to-Flight mission that took place this month.

Many of these individuals have rightly earned NASA's Exceptional Bravery Medal from NASA Administrator Michael Griffin already, but they are also worthy of the House's commendation as well.

So, I once again rise in strong support of this much over-due resolution, because as Michael Griffin stated earlier this year, "not all of NASA's heroes fly in space."

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